



NASRA

**Results of Survey on Disability Benefit Governance and Appeals
November – December 2003**

1. Who is responsible for making your system's initial determination of eligibility for disability benefits?

Medical Board: 7

Retirement System Staff: 8

3d Party Administrator: 4

Other: 10

Others include:

- Doctor who is a member of the Medical Board
- Board of Trustees
- The retirement board, upon recommendations from staff and medical advisor
- Doctor's Review committee
- Retirement Board Subcommittee
- Board-selected physician
- Medical reviewers contracted by the retirement systems
- Staff reviews medical reports and if necessary, refers claims to our medical consultants for an opinion.
- Social Security Administration
- State Department of Health

2. For respondents who cited Medical Board in question 1:

- a. Do board members evaluate applicants independent of one another and submit their recommendation, or does the board meet as a group to determine applicants' initial eligibility?**

Evaluate applicants independent of one another: 2

Meet as a group to consider applicants: 5

Comments:

- The board meets only to hear appeals
- Independent review not required and some phone consultation or other communication may occur. A single determination is made.
- Approve recommendation of Board Physicians

- b. How many members comprise the board that determines disability eligibility?**

- 3
- 2
- 11
- 3
- 3 board-certified physicians plus coordinator
- 2 boards consisting of three doctors each
- 8

c. How frequently does this board meet?

- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Every two months
- Not on a regular basis
- Weekly
- Weekly – the two boards meet on alternating weeks
- Monthly

d. On what basis are these board members paid?

Flat rate: 5

Per case: 2

3. Does your system maintain a board that hears appeals of disability application decisions?

Yes: 17

No: 12

4. As of the end of the most recent fiscal year what percentage of eligible active participants are receiving disability benefits from your system (the number receiving a disability benefit divided by the number vested for a disability benefit)?

% on Disability	Groups Covered
2.8%	General ee's, Public Safety
1.0%	General ee's, Public Safety
1.3%	Teachers, General ee's, Public Safety
3.0%	General ee's, Public Safety
1.8%, 6.5%, 1.3%	General, Public Safety, Correctional
5.0%	Teachers, General ee's, Public Safety
1.8%	General ee', Public Safety, Judges
5.0%	Teachers
7.0%	General ee's, Public Safety
4.7%	General ee's, Public Safety
1.0%	General ee's, Public Safety
1.0%	Teachers
4.3%	Teachers, General ee's

5. For the last two calendar or fiscal years, what percentage of appeals for disability benefits have resulted in each of the following?

Prior decision fully upheld	Prior decision partly upheld	Prior decision overturned
100%	0	0
76%	na	24%
100%	0	0
64%	10%	26%
75%	5%	20%
86%	0	14%
10%	na	90%
100%	0	0
75%	0	25%
90.5%	0	9.5%
60%	0	40%
100%	0	0
81%	0	19%

6. Does your system monitor the outside income of its disabilitants?

Yes: 21

No: 8

Comments (all associated with a “Yes” response)

- via federal tax returns
- Through the Department of Labor and Annual Earned Income Statements
- Annually we request Forms W-2 and any documentation a member can provide to account for any outside wage income.
- Disability recipients are required to contact our office if they are returning to any type of employment
- The member is reminded with each check that they must advise us of outside income from social security disability or workers' compensation benefits. We periodically perform verifications.

7. Does your system conduct re-examinations of disabilitants to determine their continued eligibility for disability benefits?

Yes: 23

Comments from “Yes” respondents:

- Subject to Med board recommendation, disability subject to reevaluation until retire reaches age 60
- very limited basis for recalls
- Once a year for the first five years, then once every three years thereafter
- Annually for the first five years, disability benefit recipients must submit a doctor's statement verifying the medical condition
- According to diagnosis screening guideline for temporary benefit, annually for total and permanent.continues
- Retirement system staff monitors income of disability retirees who retired before 1/1/99. A computer program matches disabilitants’ Social Security numbers against Social Security

numbers reported in state revenue department records. Disabilitants with earnings that exceed the system's limit is referred to the system's disability program third-party administrator for a medical re-exam. For those retired after 1/1/99, third-party administrator monitors income.

No: 4

Comments from respondents who did not respond "Yes" or "No"

- If independent medical examiner recommends a re-exam
- We require the member's physician to update a form randomly